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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

August 2024



39a Station Road, Desford

SMARTECH Design



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Non-Technical Summary

Three Shires Limited was commissioned by SMARTECH Design to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land adjacent to 39 Station Road, Desford. The proposed development is for the construction of a single residential property and the demolition of B1-B3. There is a second proposed development for 39 Station Road, discussed in a separate PEA.

The Site is predominantly less maintained grassland with lawn, bramble scrub, and a parking area with very low vegetation cover. There are lines of trees to the west and north and a native hedgerow towards the northeast. Two log piles, three sacks of grass cuttings and a pile of grass cuttings are situated along the west Site boundary. Three buildings (B1-B3) are located onsite. B2 has evidence of abandoned bird nests.

Within 500m of the Site there are six waterbodies (P1-P6) and two water courses.

The wider landscape has pockets of woodland but is dominated by arable farmland bordered by hedgerows and scattered trees. The Site is bordered on the south by the village of Desford and is located 11km west of Leicester city centre.

It is considered unlikely that there will be impacts on the statutory sites within 2km due to the scale and distance from the proposed development.

Root protection areas should be put in place for the trees that will be retained. Dust pollution and silt runoff into P1 should be prevented. Damage should be avoided to the native hedgerow.

Overall, the Site is considered to have low ecological value with some small amounts of habitats of limited value for some species (common or widespread amphibians, small numbers of reptiles, hedgehog and nesting birds), with any risks to these easily mitigated by implementation of standard best practice measures during any vegetation or ground material clearance.

The stables were able to be fully inspected externally and internally and have low potential for bat roosting with this being more likely to be occasional and opportunistic rather than for any longer term sustained roosting. Further surveys are not considered necessary, however it is recommended that immediately prior to demolition B1-B3 should be checked, by a suitably qualified ecologist, to ensure that bats are not using the building at that time.

Great crested newt (GCN) eDNA testing of P1-P4 (where access is possible) should be conducted to determine whether GCN are present in the surrounding area.

Although there is considered a low likelihood of a badger sett occurring on the Site, this should be checked prior to works commencing.

Table 1: Overview of Required Mitigation for each Ecological Receptor

Factor	Present	Within 2km	Recommendation(s)
Sites of Nature Conservation			
Statutory Site	No	Yes	No action required.
Non- Statutory sites	N/A	N/A	N/A
Habitat			
Modified Grasslands	Yes	Yes	No action required.
Other Neutral Grasslands	No	Yes	No action required.
Trees and Shrubs	Yes	Yes	Root protection area for retained onsite trees.
Hedgerows (Priority Habitat)	Yes	Yes	Prevent damage to the native hedgerow.
Waterbodies	No	Yes	Prevention of dust pollution and silt runoff into P1 .
Protected and Notable Species			
Badger	No	Possible	A badger walkover prior to vegetation clearance and works.
Bats	Unlikely	Yes	Buildings inspected for bats by a suitably qualified ecologist before demolition.
Birds	Possible	Possible	Works to commence out with nesting season, or nesting bird checks completed prior to vegetation clearances or tree removal.
Great crested newt or Widespread Amphibians	Possible	Possible	eDNA testing should be completed for P1-P5 . A fingertip search to identify any amphibians are present completed before hibernacula or refugia is removed. Bramble scrub clearance preformed as a two-stage cut with an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).
Reptiles	Possible	Possible	A fingertip search to identify any reptiles are present before hibernacula or refugia is removed.
Hedgehogs	Possible	Possible	Bramble scrub clearance preformed as a two-stage cut with an ECoW.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Three Shires Ltd was commissioned by SMARTECH Design on behalf of their client to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land in the north of Desford, Leicester LE9 9FN. The area of land contains two sites for two separate proposed residential developments, 39 Station Road and 39a Station Road. This PEA is for 39a Station Road, hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the current biodiversity value of the Site, highlight any ecological features that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development, and inform the design of the proposed development. The report follows good practice guidance and follows the principles of the mitigation hierarchy and British Standard (BS) 42020 2013¹.

1.3 Site Location and Context

The Site is in the north of the village of Desford, Leicestershire (**Figure 1**). The Site is 0.275ha. The approximate centre of the Site lies at British National Grid Reference (NGR) SK48270374. The Site is approximately 11km west of the centre of the City of Leicester and approximately 3km north of the A47.

The surrounding landscape is dominated to the south by the village of Desford (**Figure 2**). To the north is mainly arable farmland and modified grassland bordered by hedgerows and scattered trees (**Figure 2**). There is a pocket of forestry approximately 300m to the north and <10m to the south.

¹ CIEEM (2017) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

Figure 1: Site Location

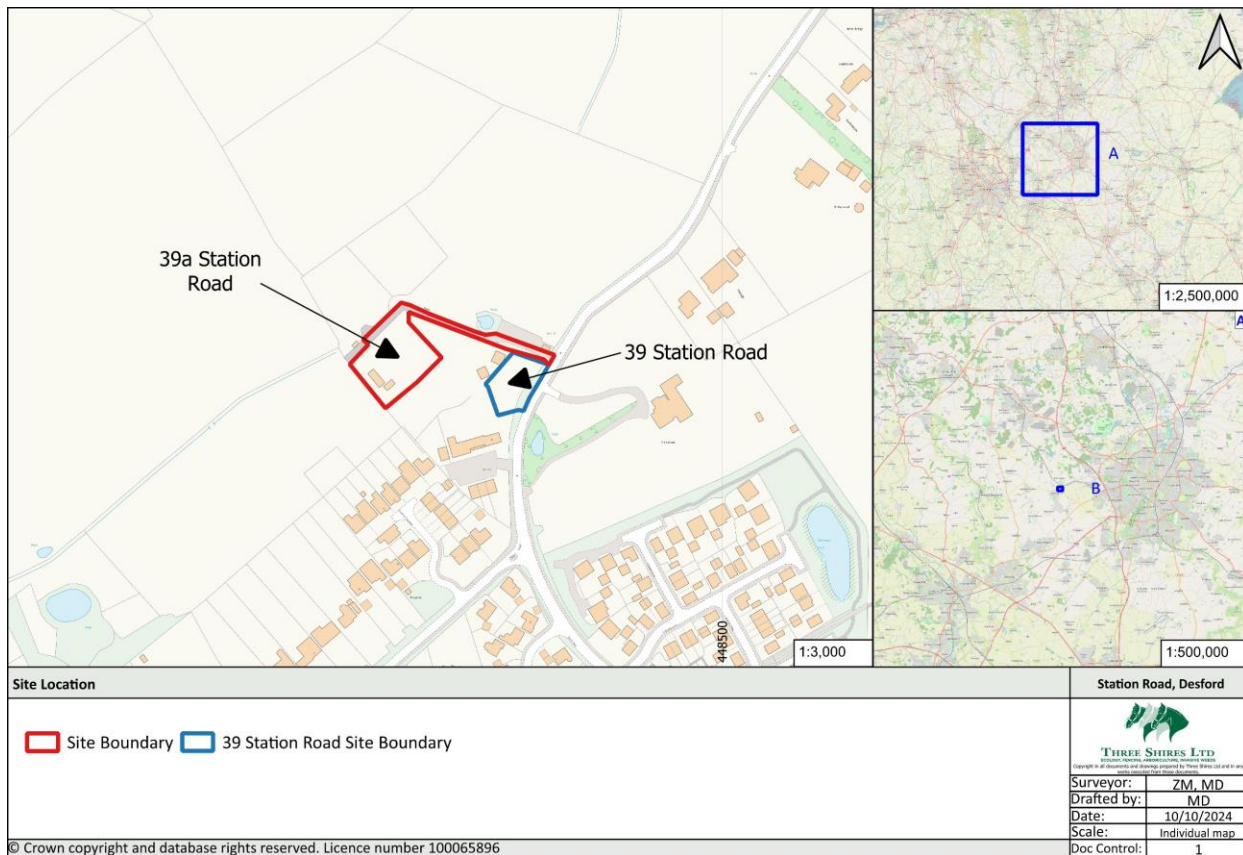
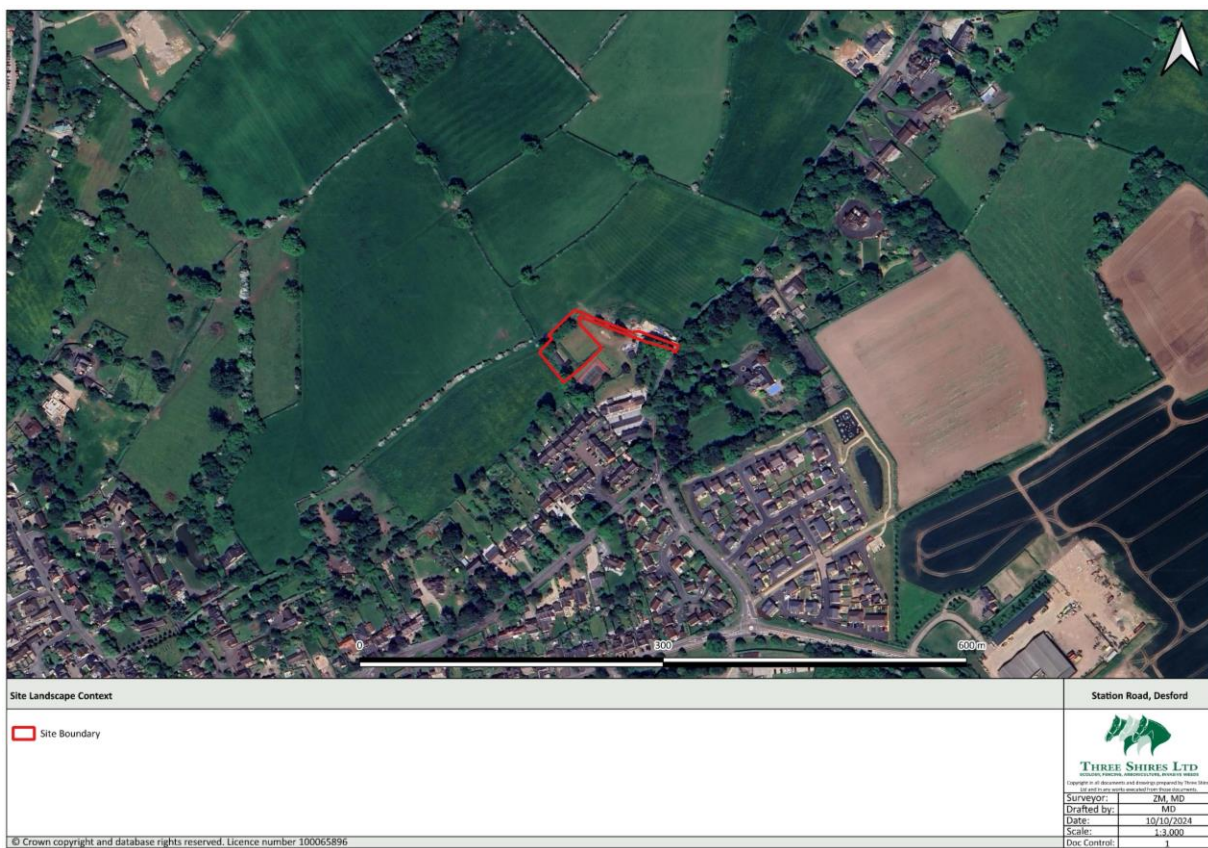


Figure 2: Site Landscape Context



1.4 Project Overview

The development proposal is for the demolition of a timber stable, barn, and shed (**B1-B3**) for the construction of one, self build, residential property (**Figure 3**). The property will have an access road originating from the existing car park. A new area of hardstanding for car parking will be installed. All the trees on Site and the native hedgerow will be retained. Much of the bramble scrub and tall forbs modified grassland will be maintained, however, cutbacks will occur. Three trees and a hedgerow will be planted.

Outside the Site boundary there is a 76.7m³ capacity balancing pond. This feature will be expanded, however the extent to which is unknown.

Figure 3: Post Development Plan



2.0 Relevant Legislation and Local Policy

Relevant legislation and National Planning Policies applicable to the Site can be found in **Appendix A**.

2.1 Local Planning Policies

Local planning policy is set out within the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006 – 2026 (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD)², adopted July 2016. The policies of relevance to this assessment are detailed below.

DM6- Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest

“Development proposals must demonstrate how they conserve and enhance features of nature conservation and geological value including proposals for their long term future management.

Major developments in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services.

Proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geological interest will be permitted where they comply with other relevant policies in the plan.

On site features should be retained, buffered and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. The removal or damage of such features shall only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated the proposal will result in no net loss of biodiversity and where the integrity of local ecological networks can be secured.

If the harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against or appropriate compensation measures provided, planning permission will be refused.

In addition to the above, where specific identified sites are to be affected the following will be taken into account:

Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites

International and Nationally Designated Sites will be safeguarded.

Development which is likely to have any adverse impact on the notified features of a nationally designated site will not normally be permitted.

In exceptional circumstances, a proposal may be found acceptable where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) A suitable alternative site with a lesser impact than that proposed is not available; and*
- b) The on-site benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the impacts on the notified features of the site and where applicable, the overall SSSI or habitat network; and*
- c) All appropriate mitigation measures have been addressed through the development management process; and*
- d) Development likely to result in a significant effect on internationally designated sites will be subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations and will not be permitted unless adverse effects can be fully avoided, mitigated and/or compensated.*

² hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk

Irreplaceable Habitats

Proposals which are likely to result in the loss or deterioration of an irreplaceable habitat would only be acceptable where:

- e) The need and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss; and,*
- f) It has been adequately demonstrated that the irreplaceable habitat cannot be retained with the proposed scheme; and*
- g) Appropriate compensation measures are provided on site wherever possible and off site where this not is feasible.*

Locally Important Sites

Development proposals affecting locally important sites should always seek to contribute to their favourable management in the long term.

Where a proposal is likely to result in harm to locally important sites (including habitats or species of principal importance for biodiversity), developers will be required to accord with the following sequential approach:

- h) Firstly, seek an alternative site with a lesser impact than that proposed;*
- i) Secondly, and if the first is not possible, demonstrate mitigation measures can be taken on site;*
- j) Thirdly, and as a last resort, seek appropriate compensation measures, on site wherever possible and off site where this is not feasible."*

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence (Zol) was defined considering the likely effects arising from the proposals, both during construction and in operation.

It is considered that the following impacts may result from the construction of low numbers of housing units:

- Temporary and permanent habitat loss;
- Injury or mortality of protected and notable species;
- Habitat degradation (e.g. dust pollution);
- Disturbance to protected and notable species resulting from works – machinery noise, vibration, light, increased human activity.

The distances from the site for these potential impacts are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Zone of Influence used for this Assessment

Ecological Receptors	Zone of Influence
Special Areas of Conservation with bat species as features of interest	Within 10km of the Site boundary
Statutory protected sites	Within 2km of the Site boundary or where any site Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) covers the development site
Non statutory protected sites	Within 1km of the Site boundary
Habitats of Principal Importance and Ancient Woodland boundaries	Within 50m of the Site boundary
Waterbodies	Within 500m of the site boundary
Protected species evidence • Badger • Bat • GCN • Otter • Water vole	Within the Site boundary 30m from the location of disturbance 500m from the Site boundary 200m from the Site boundary along watercourses 200m from the Site boundary along watercourses
Habitats	Within the site boundary plus 50m, where visible

3.2 Desk Study

The following sources were used to provide data for the desk study:

- Aerial photography – in order to aid preliminary ecological and overall assessment of the site;

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)³ – for statutory sites designated for nature conservation and recently granted (since 2009) European Protected Species (EPS) licences within 2km of the Site; and
- GCN Risk Zone (Leicestershire)⁴ – to determine if the area is important for GCN populations.
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006 - 2026 adopted July 2016

A detailed description of the methodologies for habitats and protected species can be found in **Appendix B**.

3.3 Survey Constraints / Limitations

The waterbodies and watercourses within 500m were not surveyed due to a lack of access to the land.

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the field evidence and the presence of plants and fauna on-site such as, weather conditions, the time of year, and migration patterns and behaviour. The ecological surveys undertaken to support this PEA have not therefore produced a complete list of plants and animals, and the absence of evidence of any species on-site should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present, or that it will not be present in the future.

³ magic.defra.gov.uk

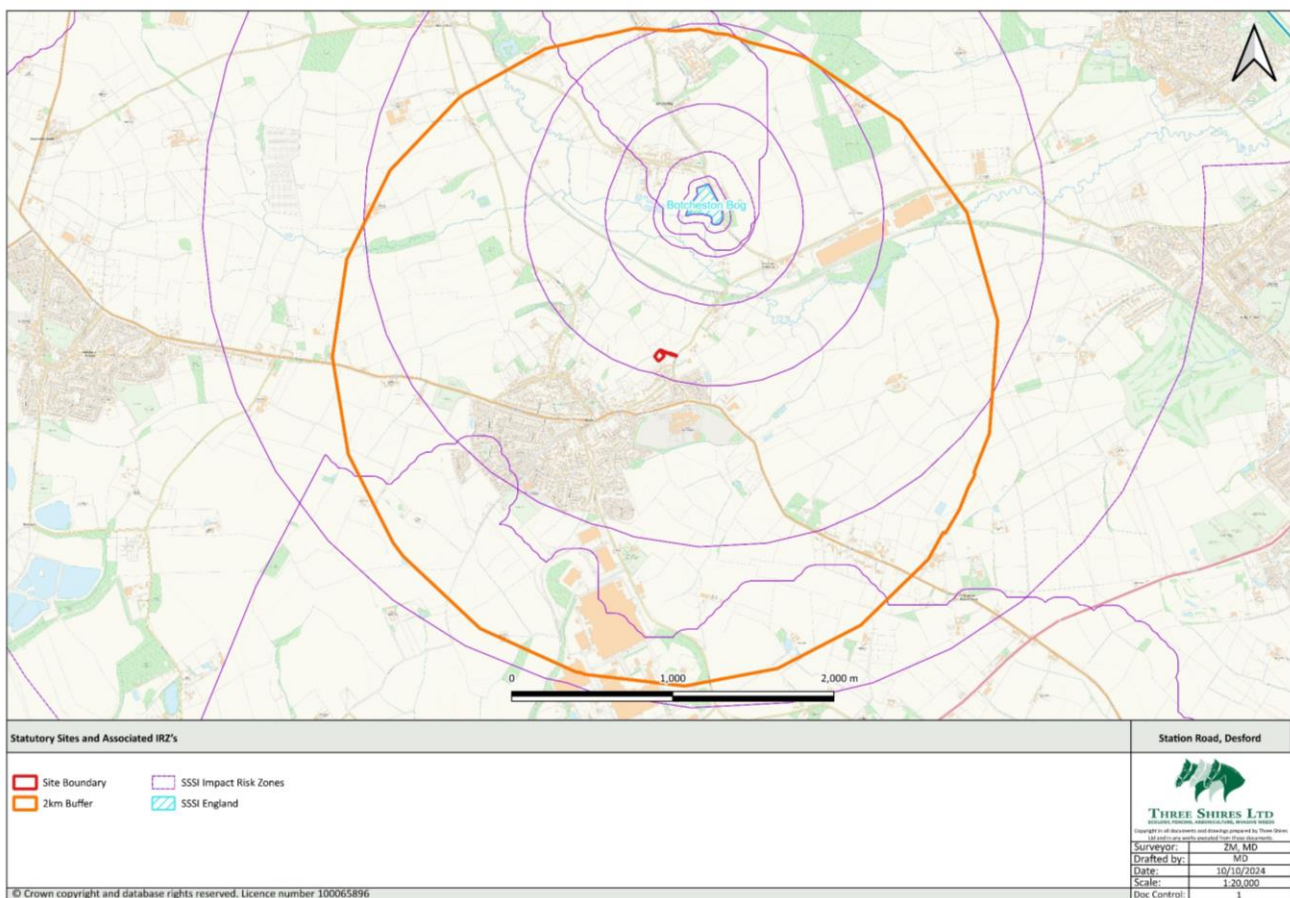
⁴ naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com

4.0 Results and Evaluation

4.1 Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Site boundary is 850m from the 2.87ha Botcheston Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and thus falls within its impact risk zone (IRZ) (**Figure 4**). This SSSI is an area of lowland neutral grassland. Due to the extent and scale of the proposed development, it is not expected to have any impacts on the SSSI. Natural England would only need to be consulted if the development exceeded 100 units.

Figure 4: Statutory Sites and Associated IRZ



4.2 Non-Statutory Sites

A background search for non-statutory sites was not undertaken as it was not considered to be proportionate or appropriate for the Site due to the small scale of the development proposals and the localised impact within the Site boundary.

4.3 Priority Habitats

A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast. Development plans indicate the hedgerow will be maintained (**Figure 3**).

4.4 Waterbodies

There are no waterbodies onsite. Mapping and aerial imagery identified six ponds (**P1-P6**) within 500m of the Site boundary (**Figure 5**). Further details of each pond are provided in **Table 3**. Two streams are present within 500m of the Site boundary (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Waterbodies Within 500m

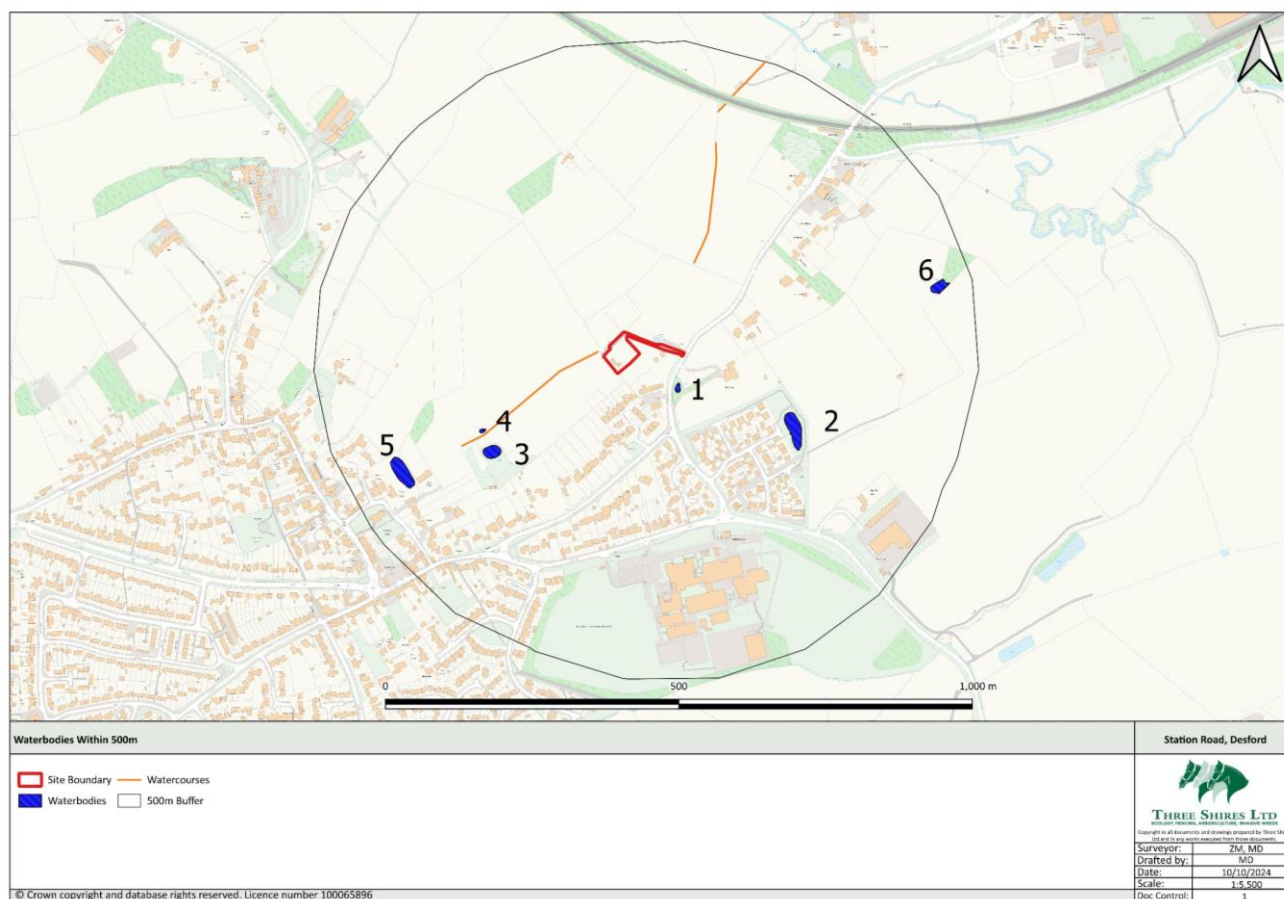


Table 2: Ponds within 500m

Pond Number (Figure 4)	Reference	NGR	Distance from Boundary and Direction to Closest Site	Separated From Site by Significant Barrier to GCN Movement?
1		SK48370368	45m south	No
2		SK48570361	200m east	No
3		SK48050357	235m west	No
4		SK48040361	239m west	No
5		SK47900354	388m west	No
6		SK48820386	435m east	Yes

4.5 Habitat Overview

The Site is comprised of a section to the west for the proposed property and the area for an access road to the east. The west section is primarily comprised of modified grassland (**Figure 6**). Towards the west of the Site there is one shed (**B1**) and two former stables (**B2** and **B3**). An area of dense bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) scrub is along the southwest Site boundary. A strip of tall forbs modified grassland forms the southeast Site boundary. A line of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and leylandii (*Cupressus × leylandii*) is parallel to the southwest Site boundary.

The north section of the Site for the access road contains mown modified grassland and a section of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface (**Figure 6**). A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast. A line of silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and an ash and field maple (*Acer campestre*) borders the Site towards the north.

Figure 6: Pre-Development Habitat Map



4.5.1 Vegetated Garden

The vegetated garden is a frequently mown lawn (**Photograph 1**). There is a short, even sward with some less maintained areas. The dominant species are perennial rye (*Lolium perenne*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Occasionally occurring species include mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). Rarely occurring species include black medic (*Medicago lupulina*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), and self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*).



Photograph 1: Looking west across vegetated garden lawn.

4.5.2 Modified Grassland

A section of modified grassland occurs towards the southwest of the Site (**Photograph 2**). This habitat is separate from the vegetated garden due to a lack of management and fencing creating a clear divide. The dominant species include perennial rye, creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and willow herb (*Epilobium spp.*). Occasionally occurring species include bindweed (*Convolvulus sp.*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), bitter dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*).



Photograph 2. Looking north across modified grassland in the west of the Site.

The north and west portions of the Site consist of a modified grassland access track (**Photograph 3**). This area is a short, even sward with less maintained strips along both sides. The dominant species include perennial rye and white clover. Occasionally occurring species include creeping thistle, willow herb, bindweed, ragwort, bitter dock, and false oat grass.



Photograph 3: Looking west across modified grassland access track.

4.5.3 Modified Grassland, Tall Forbs

A strip of tall forbs modified grassland occurs along the southwest Site boundary (**Photograph 4**). The vegetation is approximately 1.5m tall at its maximum. The dominant species include perennial rye, creeping thistle, common nettle, and willow herb. Occasionally occurring species include bindweed, hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*), ragwort, bitter dock, and false oat grass.



Photograph 4: Looking northeast across the strip of tall forbs modified grassland along the southwest Site boundary.

4.5.4 Lines of Trees

A line of trees is parallel to the southwest Site boundary (**Photograph 5**). The line of trees consists of five mature ash and one mature leylandii towards the west.



Photograph 5: Looking north to line of ash and leylandii along the west Site boundary.

A line of trees borders the Site towards the north (**Photograph 6**). The line of trees consists of three mature silver birch (*Betula pendula*) to the east and an ash and a field maple (*Acer campestre*) to the west.



Photograph 6: Looking south at the line of trees towards the north of the Site.

4.5.5 Bramble Scrub

A linear area of dense bramble scrub is along the southwest boundary to the rear of **B2** (**Photograph 7**).



Photograph 7: Looking south at dense bramble scrub to the rear of **B2**.

4.5.6 Buildings

The Site contains three buildings (**B1-B3**) used for hay storage (**Table 3**). **B1** is in the northeast corner of the Site and **B2** and **B3** are in the southwest of the Site.

Table 3: Building Description

Building	Description	Photographs
B1	Shed currently used for hay storage. Timber walls and flat corrugated metal roof. The interior contains timber support beams on the walls and roof. At the base of the walls there is an approximately 5cm gap between the wall and ground.	 

Building	Description	Photographs
		
B2	The largest of the onsite buildings. Former stable currently used for hay storage. The building has timber walls and a pitched timber roof with corrugated concrete cladding. Gaps in the east aspect result in the interior being exposed and illuminated. There is no attic space.	  
B3	Former stable currently used for hay storage. The building has timber walls and a flat timber roof with corrugated concrete cladding. Gaps in the north aspect result in the interior being exposed and illuminated. There is no attic space.	

Building	Description	Photographs
		

4.5.7 Native Hedgerow

A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast (**Photograph 8**). The dominant species are bramble, hawthorn, and bindweed. Common ivy is occasionally occurring. The hedgerow is approximately 25m in length 3m high, and 1m wide and qualifies as a priority habitat. However, the hedgerow is a poor example and does not requiring further assessment as potentially important under the Hedgerow Regulations⁵.



Photograph 8: Looking south at the native hedgerow towards the northeast of the Site.

4.5.8 Artificial Unvegetated- Unsealed Surface

A parking and storage area to the northeast of the Site consists of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (**Photograph 9**). The area contains scattered construction machinery and materials.

⁵ The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, No. 1160



Photograph 9: Looking west across the parking and storage area

4.5.9 Off Site Habitats

Modified Grassland

An area of modified grassland is present adjacent to the vegetated garden habitat, forming a balancing pond (**Photograph 10**). The habitat is a 7m by 3m depression in the lawn with gravel and rocks at its base. The dominant species are perennial rye, false oat grass, Yorkshire fog, bitter dock, greater willow herb, and creeping thistle. Occasionally occurring species include ribwort plantain and greater plantain. Bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) rarely occurs.



Photograph 10: Looking west across balancing pond situated adjacent to the Site.

4.6 Protected and Notable Species

4.6.1 Great Crested Newt and Widespread Amphibians

The desk study identified the Site as being in an amber risk zone for district licensing of GCN. Indicating they could be present, with suitable breeding ground and terrestrial habitats. MAGIC returned no records of GCN presence within 500m of the Site boundary.

P1 may have GCN and widespread amphibian presence and has connectivity to Site due to its close proximity. **P3-P5** have good connectivity to Site via a stream and hedgerow (**Figures 2 and 5**). **P2** was created after 2019 as both a sustainable drainage systems pond and to provide habitat suitable for amphibian and reptile⁶. Amphibian and reptile hibernacula and refugia was present in the vicinity of **P2**. **P2** has fair connectivity to Site via fragmented woodland despite the presence of a road and buildings.

Although more suitable habitat for GCN and widespread amphibian are present outside the Site as a mosaic of woodland, hedgerows and modified grassland (**Figure 2**) there is some suitable habitat onsite. Along the line of trees to the southwest there are two piles of processed timber (**Photograph 11 and 12**). The log piles offer suitable refugia and hibernacula for GCN and widespread amphibians. The bramble scrub to the rear of **B2**, strip of tall forbs modified grassland, native hedgerow, and off-Site gravel and rocks in balancing pond offer suitable terrestrial habitat and potential refugia.



Photograph 11: Pile of processed timber along the west line of trees.



Photograph 12: Pile of processed timber along the west line of trees.

4.6.2 Birds

The onsite lines of trees, bramble scrub, and native hedgerow provide habitat that could be utilised by nesting birds, some of which may be priority species. All wild bird species, their nests, and eggs are protected by law. Due to the limited extent of the Site, it is unlikely that important populations of these species occur.

The owl box outside the Site boundary offers potential roosting for barn owl and other bird species (**Photograph 13**).

⁶ https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/info/200249/view_planning_applications_and_decisions



Photograph 13: Owl box on mature ash.

Evidence of three previous swallow nests and bird droppings were identified in B2 (**Photographs 14, 15, and 16**).



Photograph 14: Bird nests in B2.



Photograph 15: Bird nest in B2.



Photograph 16: Bird droppings in B2

It is considered very unlikely that ground nesting birds would utilize the modified grassland on Site. This is due to the predominantly short length of grass and the less maintained longer grass being subject to regular disturbance.

4.6.3 Reptiles

Along the west Site boundary there are three sacks of decomposing grass cuttings (**Photograph 17**) and a pile of decompose grass cuttings (**Photograph 18**).



Photograph 17: Three sacks of grass cuttings along the southwest line of trees.



Photograph 18: Pile of grass cuttings in the northeast Site.

The grass cuttings are a suitable breeding site for slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*).

4.6.4 Hedgehog

The bramble scrub and native hedgerow offer suitable foraging and hibernacula for hedgehog. The lawn offers further foraging opportunities. The grass cuttings provide hibernacula. In addition, there is connectivity to the adjacent section of woodland that provides hedgehog foraging and hibernacula (**Figure 2**).

4.6.5 Badgers

There was no onsite evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) presence. However, Badgers are very mobile and the bramble scrub to the east of the Site and surrounding woodland and open country offer some suitable habitat for sett building or foraging. As such, their presence on the Site cannot be ruled out.

4.6.6 Bats

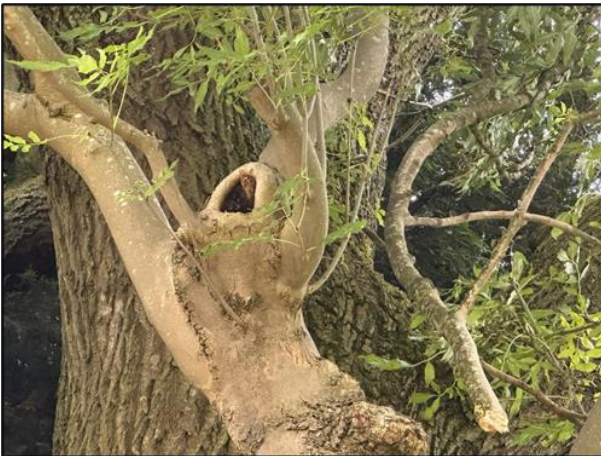
MAGIC has records of licences issued within 2km of the Site boundary. The destruction of a brown long eared (*Plecotus auratus*) resting place or breeding site was allowed in 2010 at a location 850m north of the Site boundary. The destruction of a brown long eared and common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) resting place was allowed in 2017 at a location 1.99km north of the Site boundary. These species are widespread and locally common in Leicestershire and would be expected.

A mature ash located adjacent to the southeast Site boundary has a PRF for an individual bat (**Photograph 19**). The ash is approximately 15m high and forms part of a line of leylandii.



Photograph 19: Mature ash 6m west of the Site boundary with PRF.

The individual PRF is a knot hole on a branch approximately 6m high (**Photograph 20**). The knot hole may have significant depth and cavities, increasing its suitability. However, the upwards aspect results in the PRF being exposed and rain may enter. As such, the PRF has negligible suitability.



Photograph 20: Knot hole on mature ash.

None of the onsite trees offer Potential Roosting Features (PRFs).

An informal PRA of the onsite buildings (**B1-B3**) was conducted. **B1-B3** buildings offer limited value for roosting bats due to exposure, lack of void spaces, human presence, and lack of darkness (**Table 2**). It has been concluded they have very low suitability for roosting bats.

4.6.7 Other Protected or Notable Species

The following protected species are considered to be absent from the Site due to a lack of suitable habitat and field evidence:

- Hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
- White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)
- Riparian Mammals including otter and water vole
- Notable invertebrates

- Freshwater and Migratory Fish
- INNS
- Other mammals

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The biodiversity value of the Site is considered to be low due to the predominant habitats being a vegetated garden and modified grassland. However, **B2**, the bramble scrub, native hedgerow and lines of trees offer potential for nesting birds and the log piles offer potential refugia and hibernacula for amphibians and reptiles. The grass cuttings offer a potential breeding site for slow worm and grass snake, as well as further hibernacula for hedgehogs. The bramble scrub and native hedgerow offers amphibian refugia and hedgehog foraging and hibernacula. The lawns offer further foraging opportunities for hedgehog. There is a very low possibility for bat presence in **B1-B3**.

The wider landscape offers suitable badger habitat for sett building or foraging.

The development is unlikely to cause any direct or indirect effects to statutory sites of conservation.

The proposals will likely result in the loss of some modified grassland and bramble scrub.

The appropriate recommendations to mitigate for potential impacts to habitats and protected species are outlined in the next section. The results of the following recommendations should be used to inform a method statement.

5.2 Habitats

Adherence to best practice guidelines in respect to working in the vicinity of trees should be employed, including the implementation of root protection areas⁷.

The native hedgerow should be protected from damage as a priority habitat.

The development proposals have a low potential to impact **P1**, which is 45m south of the Site boundary. Standard mitigation measures for the prevention of dust pollution and silt runoff should be put in place to avoid impacts⁸.

5.3 Protected and Notable Species

5.3.1 GCN and Widespread Amphibians

eDNA testing of ponds P1-5 should be undertaken, where access is possible with specific actions for this species informed following that testing. If GCN are considered absent following testing, then the measures for widespread amphibians and hedgehog will provide a suitable methodology if one is found on Site. Should this occur then a re-evaluation will be required.

Prior to the removal of refugia or hibernacula (log piles), a suitably qualified ecologist will be required to conduct a fingertip search to identify any amphibians.

If vegetation clearance of the bramble scrub occurs, a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PMWS) should be employed. This should involve a two-stage cut of the vegetation, the first stage will reduce the vegetation to no less than 150mm. The second cut to fully clear the vegetation will occur after a period of 48

⁷ British Standards Institute (2012). BS 5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design demolition and construction – Recommendations*

⁸ Kwan, J., et al. (2023). *Environmental good practice on site guide*. 5th edn. CIRIA

hours. All arisings will be dispersed. This work must be supervised by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).

5.3.2 Birds

It is recommended that vegetation clearances and removal of trees should commence outside nesting season (March - August) to prevent the loss of bird nests. If it is not possible to work outside this period, it is recommended that nesting bird checks are completed immediately prior to tree felling or vegetation clearances.

Provision for nesting birds should be made within the landscape and site design, via boxes and in particular features suitable for nesting swallow and house martin.

5.3.3 Hedgehog

If vegetation clearances of the bramble scrub occur, a PMWS should be employed. This should involve a two-stage cut of the vegetation, the first stage will reduce the vegetation to no less than 150mm. The second stage cut to fully clear the vegetation will occur after a period of 48 hours. All arising's will be dispersed. This work must be supervised by a suitably qualified ECoW.

5.3.4 Reptiles

Prior to the removal of refugia or hibernacula (the grass cuttings and log piles), a suitably qualified ecologist will be required to conduct a fingertip search to identify any reptiles. If any reptiles are found, they should be moved to a suitable area offsite. Such habitats should only be undertaken between March and October.

5.3.5 Badgers

A badger walkover prior to vegetation clearance and works is recommended to check for evidence of badgers onsite.

5.3.6 Bats

Due to the low suitability of **B1-B3** for bat species no further surveys are required. However, there is still the possibility of the building being used as an occasional roost. As such, the buildings should be inspected by a suitably qualified ecologist before demolition occurs.

A small number of varying types of woodcrete bat boxes should be included within site landscaping design on retained trees.

Appendix A Relevant Legislation and Policies

Legislation

The main pieces of legislation regarding the protection of species and habitats in the UK are the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Other legislation is in force which gives protection to certain species, such as the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, specific activities, such as the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 and specific habitats, such as the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (as amended).

Invasive non-native species are regulated via a combination of the Invasive Alien Species (Permitting and Enforcement) Order 2019 and Section 14/Schedule 9 of the 1981 Act.

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, all public bodies are required to have due regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their function. Under this Act, habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England are identified and published under the provisions of Section 41 (S41).

Planning Policies

The biodiversity policies which are most relevant on a national level are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁹.

National Planning Policies

In terms of planning policy, at a national level, Chapter 15 of the NPPF (which relates to conserving and enhancement the nature environmental) requires Local Authorities to take measures to:

- Refuse planning permission if significant harm to biodiversity results from a development that cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for;
- Develop planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- Not usually permit development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments). The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSI;
- Refuse planning permission for development that results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees), unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- Support development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

⁹ National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Appendix B Methodology

Habitat Survey

This was conducted by undertaking a systematic walkover over of the Site habitats, using a route which allowed all habitats to be viewed and flora species identified where possible. Habitats were defined and mapped using the 'UKHab V2.01' classification system.

Dominant plant species were noted, as were any protected, uncommon, invasive species or species indicative of a particular habitat type, but there was no attempt to compile exhaustive species lists for this element of the Site assessment. Botanical nomenclature in this report follows Stace (2019)¹⁰ for both scientific and common names.

The survey also included:

- A preliminary search for evidence of protected or important species and species groups, and for habitats and features likely to host them if direct evidence is absent;
- The identification of other constraints (e.g., invasive non-native plant species) and any further opportunities for ecological enhancement; and
- An assessment to identify any potential roosting features (PRF) of significant buildings and trees providing bat roost potential.

Protected and Notable Species

Badger

Field signs for badger (*Meles meles*) within or adjacent to the Site were recorded in accordance with the standard methodology outline (Harris et al 1989) which includes surveying for active sett entrances, as well as spoil, bedding, latrines, hairs, prints, foraging signs and pathways.

A walkover of the whole site (including land, where accessible, within approximately 30m of the Site boundary) was undertaken and signs of badger activity were recorded in accordance with the standard methodology outline¹¹. Signs of activity include:

- Sett entrances (entrances that are greater than 25cm in diameter with a flattened oval appearance);
- Presence of and size of any spoil heaps outside tunnel entrances;
- Presence of bedding material within or outside tunnel entrances;
- The degree of smoothness, or wear of the tunnel sides;
- The degree of any vegetation covering tunnel entrances, the presence of any debris within the tunnel;
- Faeces;

¹⁰ Stace, C (2019) *New Flora of the British Isles*. 4th edn. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

¹¹ Surveying Badgers, Harris S. et. al, 1989

- Paths between setts or leading to feeding habitats;
- Areas of scratching at the base of tree trunks or branches;
- Scrapes into the ground (snuffle holes) where badgers have searched for food;
- Bundles of vegetation where badgers may sleep above ground (day nests);
- Hair traces;
- Tracks.

When found, the activity level and status of the sett was based on the number of used, partially used and disused entrances. The definition of a badger sett “current use” is outlined in the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) and further in a guidance by Natural England¹²; mainly smooth-sided entrances, clear of debris and vegetation, with spoil heaps and sometimes bedding material and footprints outside.

If setts were located, then they were categorised according to **Table 2**, with the activity status categorised according to **Table 3**.

Table 2: Sett Categories

Sett Type	Definition
Main	Typically, several active entrances with large spoil heaps and obvious paths leading from and between sett entrances. Signs of frequent and constant high levels of activity. May contain inactive entrances.
Annexe	Normally close to a main sett (<50m), comprising several entrances with well-worn paths between the main and annex sett. May not be in use all the time, even if main sett is very active.
Subsidiary	Usually some distance from main sett (>150m) with several entrances, but no obvious paths connecting to other setts. May only be used intermittently.
Outlier	Often comprise one or two entrances with little spoil outside. No obvious paths connecting to other setts and only used sporadically. May also be used by foxes and rabbits.

Table 3: Entrance and Overall Sett Activity Status Criteria

Sett status	Definition	Field signs
Active	Where field signs indicate that the sett or entrance is currently being occupied by badgers.	Field signs include recently excavated spoil, bedding material, footprints, hairs, fresh latrines and with well-worn paths present between entrances and leading into surroundings, entrances generally clear of vegetation and look well used.
Inactive	Where field signs indicate a strong likelihood of no or limited badger activity within the previous three months.	Absence of fresh spoil, bedding or footprints, leaf build up in tunnel entrances, extensive cobwebs in tunnels, seedlings growing in tunnel entrances etc. Paths may be present but less well defined.
Disused	Where field signs indicate that the sett has not been used for some	Large amount of leaf litter / debris collected at tunnel entrances and vegetation grown up around or inside entrances. No obvious paths visible leading to

¹² Guidance on ‘Current Use’ in the definition of a Badger Sett, *Natural England 2009*,
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140523111208/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/WMLG17_tcm6-11815.pdf

Sett status	Definition	Field signs
	considerable time, typically more than 3 months minimum.	and from entrance and spoil heap has dispersed / weathered and become re-vegetated. May be partially collapsed or blocked.

Bats

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken to determine the Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) which could support roosting bats. This was undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced Three Shires Ltd ecologists led by a suitably experienced ecologist for the complexity of the structure being surveyed and the assessment of the buildings and trees and their suitability for roosting bats were carried out from the ground using binoculars and torches (where necessary).

The external surfaces of any buildings were inspected to check for loose or lifted roof tiles, soffit boards, fascias, guttering or cracked brickwork. Internal inspections were also undertaken, where access was permitted, to give a broader understanding of the suitability of the building and to identify any potential features that may provide roosting opportunities.

An assessment of the trees and their suitability for roosting bats was also carried out from the ground using binoculars and torches (where necessary). These were assessed for features such as woodpecker holes, fissures, cracks, cavities, and loose bark that could be suitable for use by roosting bats.

Where features were identified, observations of evidence of bat use or activity, such as droppings, urine stains, odour, feeding remains, scratch marks, grease stains, or wear marks were recorded.

Table 4 below details the level of suitability for roosts and the features that classify each suitability level.

Table 4: Bat Roost Suitability Levels

Suitability Level	Typical Features / Evidence
Confirmed	Evidence or presence of bats within feature or on/within building/structure
High	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat.
Moderate	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
Low	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost Sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e., unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Negligible	Negligible features present that are unlikely to support roosting bat species

Birds

The species of birds encountered during the survey were recorded and details of suitable habitats for nesting birds during the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive) were noted, with habitat suitability for

notable species or important assemblages being considered, including barn owl. Binoculars were used to aid vision and the presence of nests, where observed, was also recorded.

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

An assessment of all on-site waterbodies and those within the immediate vicinity of the Site boundary were surveyed for their potential to provide suitable habitat for GCN. If available to be surveyed, each pond was also given Habitat Suitability Index¹³ (HSI) score. This allowed a numerical value to be given to each pond based on its suitability based on variety of factors. These scores range from < 0.5 being poor to > 0.8 being excellent (Table 5).

Table 5: HSI Scores

HSI score	Pond Suitability
< 0.50	Poor
0.50 - 0.59	Below average
0.60 - 0.69	Average
0.70 - 0.79	Good
> 0.80	Excellent

Reptiles

Suitable habitat for grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), slow worm and adder (*Vipera berus*) was identified and recorded. Evidence for field signs for reptile (e.g. sloughs, burrows, eggs) and an assessment of habitat potential for reptiles (e.g. edges/ecotones, ridges, hummocks, sunny slopes, brash heaps) were recorded.

Riparian Mammals

The waterbodies on Site were searched for signs of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), European otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) and evaluated for suitability of habitat using binoculars where surveillance of the opposing bank was not possible. The aim of this survey was to look for and identify any signs of the presence of riparian mammal using field signs such as, visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, latrines, footprints, (although these on their own do not indicate a positive presence) food caches, burrows, gardens, runways through vegetation, nesting material pulled into and blocking the entrance to burrows.

Otter

The survey for otter was undertaken following best practice guidelines and consisted of a bankside survey 200 metres upstream and downstream of the proposed footbridge on both banks searching for any visible signs of otter activity including visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, scat, footprints, slides into the river, potential holt locations and any visible feeding remains.

Water Vole

The water vole assessment was undertaken following best practice guidelines and consisted of a bankside survey covering a distance of 200 metres upstream and downstream on both riverbanks. The aim of this survey was to look for and identify any signs of the presence of water vole using field signs such as, visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, latrines, footprints, (although these on their own do not indicate a positive

¹³ <https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file>

presence) food caches, burrows, gardens, runways through vegetation, nesting material pulled into and blocking the entrance to burrows.

White-Clawed Crayfish

A bankside assessment of the river habitat and suitability for white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) was carried out. The stream substrate, form, flow, bankside structure, vegetation were noted, as well as any signs of feeding upon crayfish (in the form of remains on banks).

Freshwater and Migratory Fish

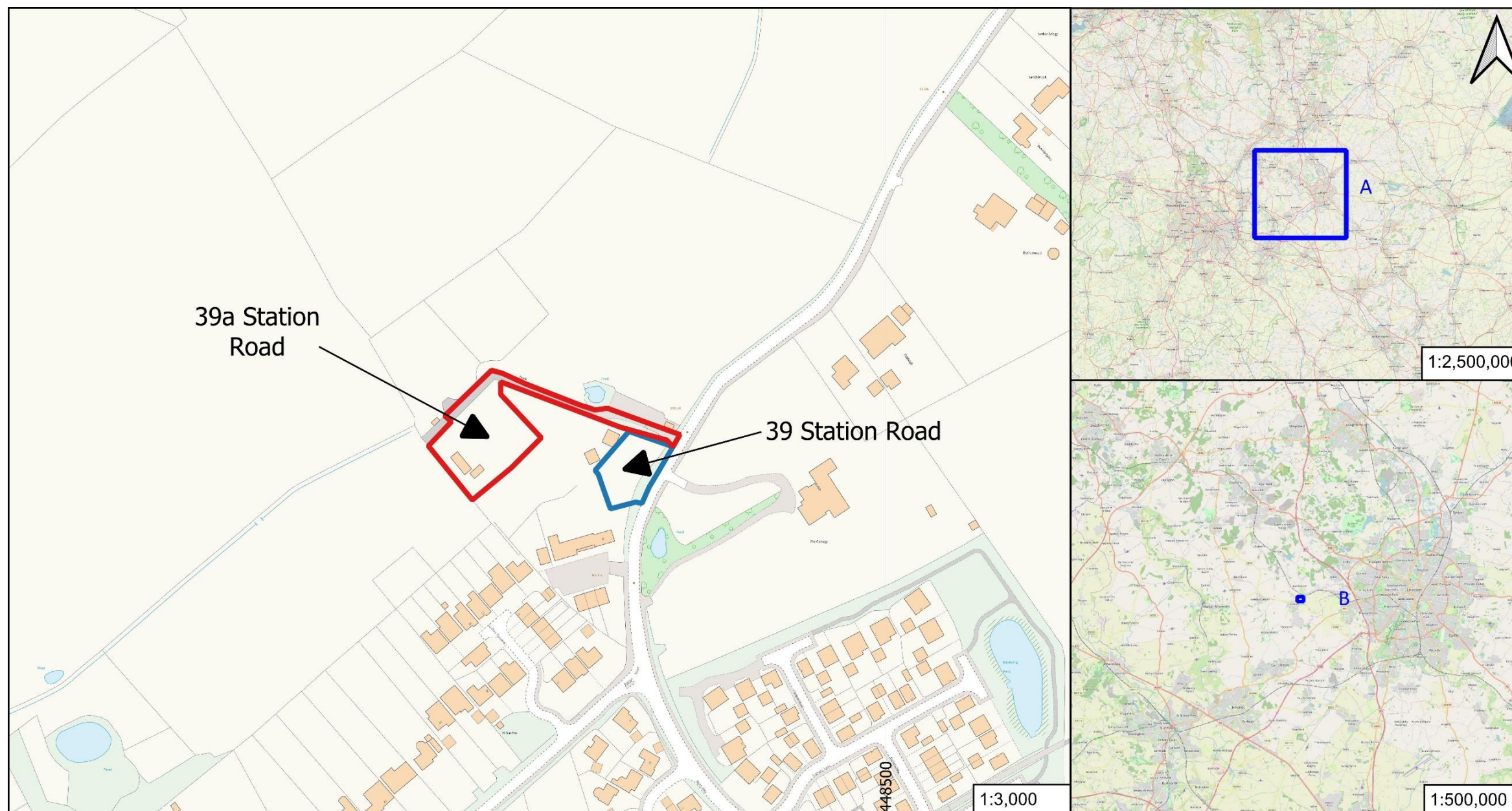
The waterbodies on Site were visually evaluated for suitability of habitat for fish and observed for the presence of any species.

Other Notable Species

The Site was also assessed for suitability for other protected species such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

Appendix C A3 Maps

a Site Location



Site Location

Station Road, Desford

 Site Boundary 39 Station Road Site Boundary



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Scale:	Individual map
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b Site Landscape Context

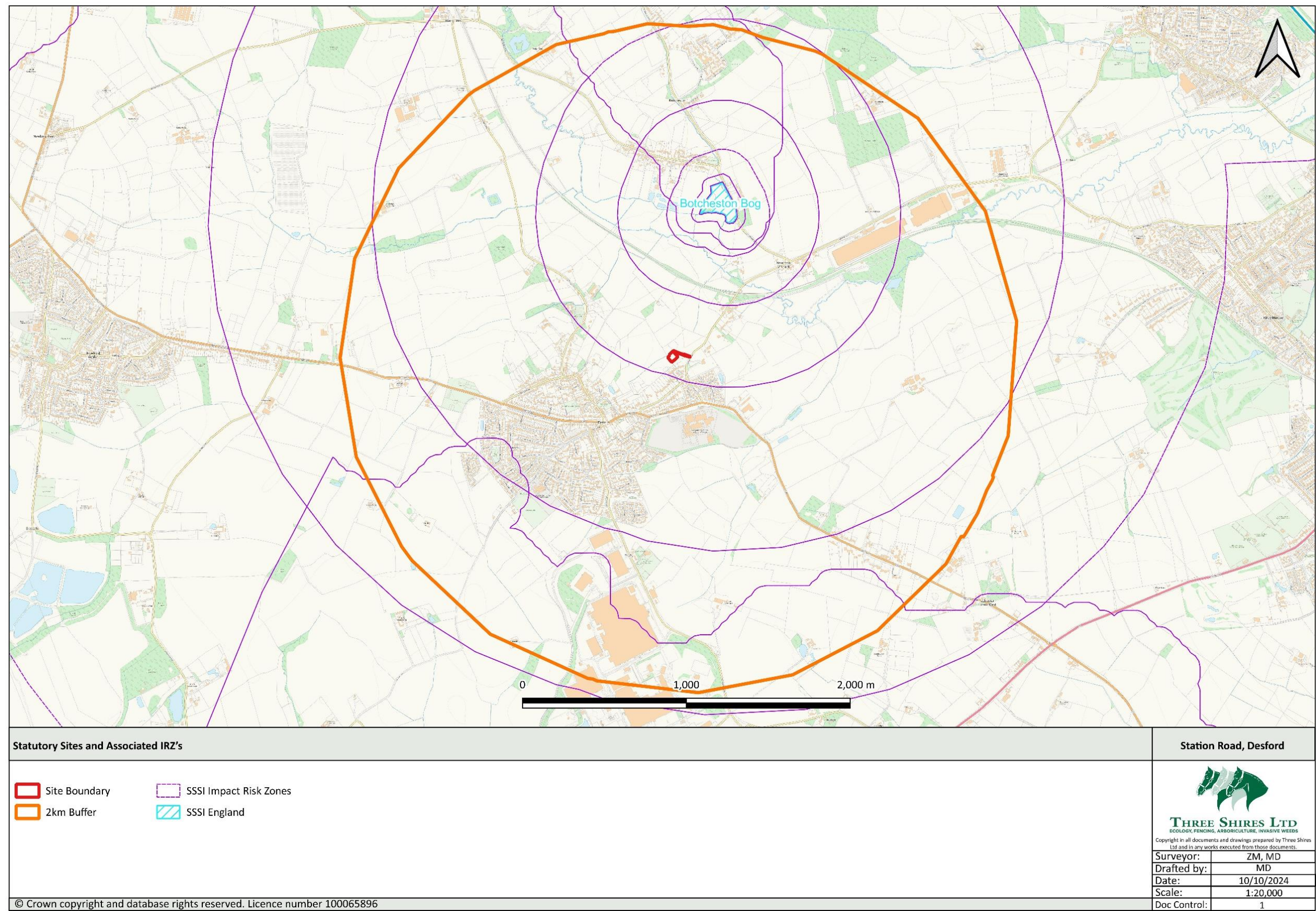


Site Landscape Context	Station Road, Desford										
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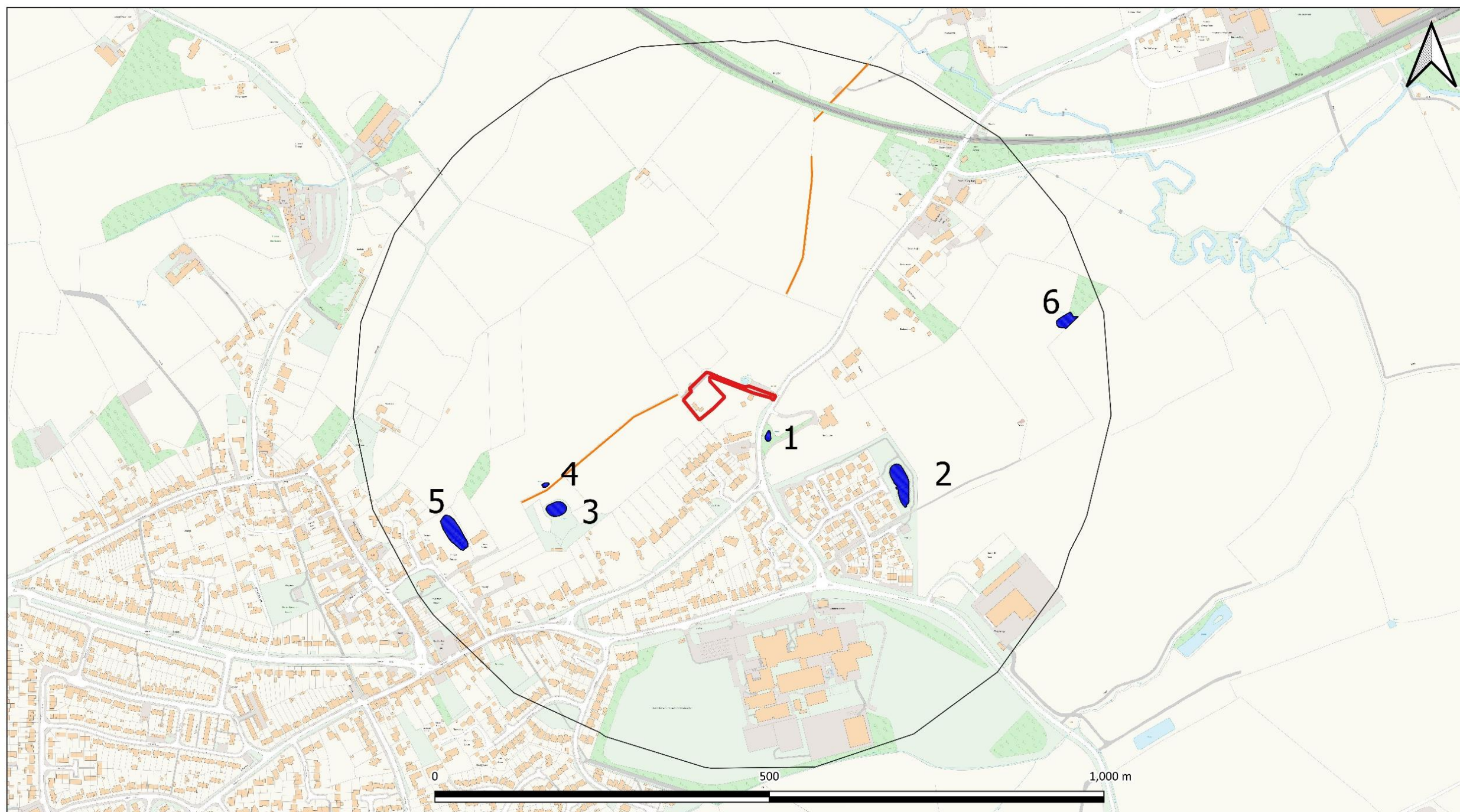
c Post Development Plans



d Statutory Sites and Associated IRZ



e Waterbodies Within 500m



Waterbodies Within 500m

Station Road, Desford

- Site Boundary
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- 500m Buffer



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f Pre-Development Habitat Map

